

## Side-by-Side God Encounters for Toddler Groups

Why not create little moments in your toddler group where your under fives and their parents or carers can experience God together and then take that experience home with them? Here are ten side-by-side encounters you could use. Simply introduce the theme, give them a chance to have a go together, and suggest ideas for how they could do this at home.

Find out [more about fringe families here](https://parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/post/fringe-families) (parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/post/fringe-families) and how we can serve them best, including more about why side-by-side encounters are so powerful.

| Theme                              | During the group                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | At home                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <b>Blessing each other</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain that in the bible there is a special way of praying called a 'blessing'. It's a way of asking God for good things for each other. We can ask God for a blessing for anyone, including our children.</li> <li>Teach everyone a simple blessing and practice saying it together:<br/>'God make his face shine (open out hands like a sunburst) on you<br/>And give you his peace (wrap arms around yourself)'.</li> </ul>                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When you are at home, you can take a moment to bless each other – at bedtime, breakfast or whenever works for your family.</li> </ul>                    |
| <b>God helps us learn and grow</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk about how God helps us to learn and grow.</li> <li>With your toddler draw pictures of things you or they have learned or done for the first time recently: using a potty, going to a new place, overcoming a fear, trying new food, for example.</li> <li>Remind your toddler of one of those things – high five them and say: 'Yay, you did it!' Then add: 'thank you (name of anyone who helped) and thank you God!'</li> </ul>                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At home, when you or your toddler is proud of a new achievement, high five them - 'Yay you did it! Thank you (name) and thank you God!'</li> </ul>       |
| <b>Peace</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share the story of Jesus calming the storm - notice how Jesus brings peace in a storm.</li> <li>You might want to invite someone to share a story about a time when their life felt like a storm and how God helped them find peace in the middle of it.</li> <li>Ask the children to sit in the middle of a parachute or a big blanket. Shake it up and down like a storm.</li> <li>Shout 'Peace, be still!'. Ask the children to go to their parent or carer for a big hug.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At home, when you are super busy or stressed or just need a bit of quiet, find a blanket, wrap yourselves up in it and ask God for his peace.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Photo prayers</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have lots of people we love! Ask people to share some photos on their phone with their toddler of people they love. They might want to take a new photo of each other, or a selfie together.</li> <li>We can pray for people we love. This just means asking God to help them or love them or bless them.</li> <li>Scroll through your photos. When you find one of someone you love, point to that person and say: God, please bless / help / love that person.</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When you are at home, choose a photo, and pray for that person. You can ask God to help them, or just love and bless them.</li> </ul>                    |
| <b>Resting in God's love</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share a suitable song such as 'May God's blessing be upon you now'. Explain we're going to have a time when we can just rest quietly in God's love.</li> <li>Play the song and encourage everyone to lie quietly or cuddle together, and enjoy each other's love and God's love too.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give parents and carers the link to the song.</li> <li>Anytime you want to know God's love, you can play this song and rest quietly together.</li> </ul> |

| Theme                                | During the group                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | At home                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>God is with us wherever we go</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the bible God made a man called Joshua a promise: 'I will be with you wherever you go'. God promises never to leave his friends. Wherever we go, God will be with us. You might want to invite someone to share a story of how God being with them helps them.</li> <li>With your toddler, draw pictures of different places you go: home, nanny's, preschool, church, shops etc. Point to each one: God is with us wherever we go.</li> <li>Then teach everyone this rhyme, and use it when you say goodbye today:<br/>'God is here (point at the ground)<br/>God's outside too (point outside)<br/>God is with us wherever we go (stretch arms up high and round).'</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At home, as you leave your house, pause and say this together to remind you that God is with you wherever you go.</li> </ul>                                                         |
| <b>Telling God</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain that we can talk to God about everything. What we enjoy. What we're scared of. How we're feeling. What we need.</li> <li>We can tell God that in different ways. You can tell him in your head or whisper into your hand so he can hear. You can write what you want to say or draw a picture of it.</li> <li>Today we're going to try whispering into our hands.</li> <li>Ask everyone to whisper into their hands one thing that's made them happy today. Toddlers may need some help to choose that thing but should be encouraged to whisper it themselves.</li> </ul>                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At home, choose a time when you are relaxed like bedtime or after lunch</li> <li>Ask everyone to tell God one thing that's made them happy today.</li> </ul>                         |
| <b>God cares about our feelings</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk about how we all have big feelings. Encourage the children and adults to show you with their faces and bodies feelings such as happy, sad, angry, tired, frightened.</li> <li>Explain that God knows how we are made - because he made us! Share Psalm 139:13-14.</li> <li>God cares for us and cares about what we feel. We can use our bodies and faces, as well as words, to tell God how we are feeling.</li> <li>Practice telling God using some of the emotions above.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At home, when you have a big emotion, as well as talking about it together, you can show it to God too.</li> </ul>                                                                   |
| <b>God is here breathing</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If we're upset or lonely or need calm, it is helpful to remember that whatever's going on, God is with us and wants to help</li> <li>This is a way to help us remember that.<br/>Put your hand on your tummy or your heart.<br/>Breathe in: "God is here."<br/>Breathe out: "God loves me."<br/>Repeat 3 times.</li> <li>Practice this together.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At home, any time you are upset or lonely or need calm, you can use this breathing exercise to help you remember that whatever is going on God is here and wants to help.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Loving our neighbours</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain that God loves everyone and we can share his love.</li> <li>An easy way to do that is just to smile and make others feel noticed and welcome.</li> <li>Ask everyone to smile and wave at each person in turn, and say 'God loves [name]'.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When you see your neighbours, smile and wave at them.</li> <li>Tell each other: 'God loves [name]'.</li> </ul>                                                                       |